

EVALUATION ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to share any relevant information that they may have.

TITLE OF THE EVALUATION	Evaluation of performance of EU Info Centres in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions (2011-2017)
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	DG NEAR- A4
INDICATIVE PLANNING (PLANNED START DATE AND COMPLETION DATE)	Q1- 2018
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	

The Roadmap is provided for information purposes only. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the document, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Context, purpose and scope of the evaluation

Context

This evaluation is part of the DG NEAR multiannual Evaluation plan and it should be launched in early 2018. It is in line with the EU Better Regulation¹, which emphasises the need of systemic and timely evaluation of European Commission programmes, activities, instruments and non-spending activities in order to demonstrate accountability and to promote lesson learning to improve policy and practice.

The EU's Enlargement Strategy² underlines that public understanding of the benefits that the EU has already brought and can bring to the region is vital to encourage political leaders to pursue the required reforms vigorously. Effective communication on how the enlargement process works and its implications for citizens' lives remains essential for ensuring public support. Communication activities should stress the EU's fundamental priorities, such as human rights, rule of law, good neighborly relations, economic governance and public administration reform. Effective communication work requires a joint effort of the EU and its Member States as well as of the governments and civil society in the enlargement zone itself.

Better communicating and promoting EU policies is also at the heart of the new European Neighbourhood Policy³. Improved public diplomacy will contribute to better explaining the rationale of EU policies and the positive impact of concrete EU actions. Visibility for the EU should be made a condition of working with implementing partners. More involvement of the Member States in setting communication priorities should help ensure a more coherent EU voice. EU Delegations in the partner countries will work closely together with Member States' representatives in their engagement with key stakeholders, in particular civil society. Outreach activities are also necessary inside the EU to explain to the citizens why stable, secure and prosperous countries in our near vicinity are key to the EU's own stability and security.

The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations⁴ (DG NEAR) has a comprehensive communication strategy for the European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, developed in coordination with the European External Action Service (EEAS)⁵ and the Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM)⁶ adopted in 2015 and a Visibility Action Plan to enhance the visibility of EU funding in the region. The Communication Strategy provides the overall framework and the basis for the annual planning of communication and information activities of DG NEAR and the EU Delegations⁷ in the countries covered by the policies.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/index_en.htm

² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/package_en

³ JOIN(2015) 50 final Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy;

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/overview_en

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/about/directorate-general_en

⁶ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/communication#department_plans

⁸ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/area/geo_en

The communication objectives set in the strategy are in line with the #EUGlobalPlayer corporate communication theme as defined by the European Commission services and the EEAS.

Key objectives:

- Improve dissemination of information and facilitate dialogue on the two policies, and related developments;
- Increase understanding on the scope, volume and results of the EU's activities in the countries/regions in terms of political, economic and social relations;
- Use public diplomacy to explain the EU's role and promote a positive image of it;
- Facilitate the access of relevant stakeholder organizations, opinion formers and multipliers, including journalists from national and regional media in the EU and in the partner countries, and grassroots initiatives, to factual and objective information about the two policies and related developments.

Expected results:

- Factual information about EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies and related key themes is available and has been disseminated to the target groups through relevant channels;
- Increased debate among target groups;
- Effective contacts and partnerships have been established with relevant organisations in order to ensure sustainability and multiplier effect.

Many communication activities are currently implemented both in Headquarters and by the EU Delegations on the field. The EU Delegations design and implement their information and communication activities and, where relevant, local communication plans, in their respective countries, in line with the overall political priorities established by Headquarters (EEAS and DG NEAR), and with financial support from both IPA and ENI funding and the Press and Information budget managed by the EEAS.

Here are some examples of communications activities carried out by the EU Delegations:

- Outreach and networking (visibility events, seminars, conferences, workshops);
- Cultural diplomacy (e.g. dissemination of EU information at film festivals, book fairs, youth and sports events);
- Media relations / media rebuttal (media materials, events and training);
- Competitions on EU related themes;
- Thematic campaigns (e.g. mobility week, green week, women's day);
- Social media activities;
- Events for specific target groups (e.g. women, pensioners, business, youth);
- Communication about EU projects, linking project funding with policy goals.

In the case of Western Balkans and Turkey, the EU Delegations/Office and EUSR Offices have established **EU Info Centers (EUICs)** to support them in the fulfillment of their global objective: to **raise public awareness about the EU, its policies and values and to ensure an informed public debate on integration into the EU, its benefits and challenges, in terms of country reform effort and EU support.**

The EUICs are funded by the IPA Information and Communication Programmes in the enlargement region adopted on an annual basis. They are generally located in premises easily accessible to the public and aim at informing local audiences about the European Union. The management of the EUICs is typically done through a service contract, which includes a team for the implementation of various information and communication activities.

In the case of neighbourhood region, apart from the communication activities implemented by the EU Delegations locally, DG NEAR continues to develop the capacities of key information multipliers, to create awareness of EU initiatives in the Neighbourhood area among the people in partner countries, as well as to develop a number of tools to raise awareness and analyse the perception of the EU and its policies in the Neighbourhood countries through a regional communication programme OPEN Neighbourhood: Opportunities, Participation, Engagement and Networking with people from the Neighbourhood area (2009-2014 and 2015-2019). As part of this regional communication programme the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre was established in 2011 being a centrally managed Information and Campaign Support for real-time information dissemination in the region. Since 2015, the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre has evolved into the EU Neighbours portal.⁸

Purpose and scope

⁸ <http://www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy/about-project>

The General Affairs Council Conclusions of December 2015⁹ stressed the need for the EU to improve its strategic communication on EU enlargement and looked forward to the plan of the Commission and EEAS to step up efforts and engagement, alongside the Member States.

As a result, in June 2016 a joint Commission/EEAS Action Plan on Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans and Turkey has been adopted. The Joint Action Plan identifies the need for more targeted and strategic communication towards the Western Balkans and Turkey as a priority for the EEAS and DG NEAR, as well as sharing common messages and better coordinating and streamlining their communication activities with the Member States and other partners on the ground, in particular International Financial Institutions and international organizations.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned priorities, the evaluation aims at providing an assessment and evidence on the scope and performance of the EU Info Centres in the enlargement region during 2011-2017. It will identify lessons learned and provide recommendations for the improvement of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the EU Info Centres activities in the enlargement region and will explore ways for the potential establishment of EU Info Centres in the neighbourhood region.

Better communicating and promoting EU policies is also at the heart of the new European Neighbourhood Policy¹⁰. EU should seek to ensure greater visibility for the use of EU funds for the neighbourhood in the period 2014-2020. The EU should engage more on this public diplomacy agenda with governments, civil society, the business community, academia and other citizens in partner countries, in particular youth, including through science diplomacy.

Thus, lessons learned through the performance assessment of the EU Info Centres in the enlargement region should enable the evaluators to explore and propose ways/options for the potential establishment of EU Info Centres in the neighbourhood region. To be able to do that, the evaluators will also assess the performance of communication activities implemented in up to three partner countries in the neighbourhood region during 2011-2017 and taking stock of the lessons learned from the implementation of regional communications actions (evaluation 2013).

The results of the evaluation will be used to:

- Improve the performance of the EU Info Centres' activities in the enlargement region;
- Improve the functioning/management of the EU Info Centres so as to enable an efficient, effective and sustainable implementation of communication activities in the enlargement region;
- Identify options for the potential establishment of EU Info Centres in the neighbourhood region to improve the performance of communication programmes in the region;
- Identify lessons learned on the implementation of communication activities with the support of "Info Centres" in enlargement and neighbourhood regions as well as Member States for cross-fertilization;
- Improve coordination and streamlining of the EU Info Centres' communication activities with those of the Member States and other partners, in particular International Financial Institutions and international organizations in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions

In accordance with the Better Regulation agenda, the following evaluation criteria will be used: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value, complemented with impact, sustainability and complementarity.

The evaluation shall:

- Assess the performance (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and EU value added) of EU Info Centres activities in the enlargement region during 2011-2017;
- Assess the coherence, complementarity and coordination of the activities carried out by the EU Info Centres with those carried out via other EU programmes and by other partners (e.g; Member States, IFIs, international organizations) active in communicating about EU policies and programmes in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions;
- Provide conclusions and recommendations to improve the performance of the EU Info Centres activities in the enlargement region in line with the commitments taken by DG NEAR in the joint Action Plan on Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans and Turkey;

⁹ 15356/15 ELARG 73 COWEB 150

¹⁰ JOIN(2015) 50 final Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy

- Assess the performance of communication activities implemented in the neighbourhood regions during 2011-2017 (in up to three partner countries)
- Identify options for the potential establishment of EU Info Centres in the neighbourhood region and provide recommendations for improving the performance of communication activities in the neighbourhood partner countries;

The evaluation will also look into the experience of the Europe Direct Information Centres set up in Member States to explore synergies in terms of communication activities carried out, tools used to reach different audiences and lessons learned linked to the management system put in place in their case. The evaluation will take stock also of the lessons learned in implementing regional communication actions in the neighbourhood region during 2011-2017.

B. Better regulation

Consultation of citizens and stakeholders

Not being a major evaluation, and in line with the Better Regulation Guidelines, the present evaluation will not develop an on-line open public consultation (OPC)¹¹. Targeted consultation of stakeholders represents however a crucial element of the evaluation methodology and will be ensured throughout all evaluation phases.

Overall, the aims of the targeted stakeholder consultation are threefold: (i) to get stakeholders involved in the evaluation process and make them more proactive towards the aims of the evaluation; (ii) to use feedback from consultation to make the evaluation process and its outputs more relevant to stakeholders' needs; and (iii) to improve the quality, credibility and future use of the evaluation outputs through consultation and engagement of the various stakeholders.

- **Inception and desk phases:** the EU and national/regional/international stakeholders will be consulted via phone/email/face to face discussions based on a comprehensive consultation strategy developed with the support of the contractor. Use of interviews, surveys, questionnaires, focused groups and other tools will be considered and decided upon during the inception phase and fully reflected in the inception report. Comments/views will be taken on board from these stakeholders before the finalisation of the Inception and the Desk phase reports.
- **Field phase:** the evaluators will visit up to 10 "case study" countries.
- **Final report:** a stakeholders' consultation workshop will be organised to support the preparation of the final evaluation report by discussing the findings and preliminary recommendations. In addition, the draft final report will be shared for written comments with the relevant stakeholders before its approval.
- **Dissemination:** a seminar/conference will be held in Brussels once the evaluation has been completed for the presentation of the evaluation results and preparation of the follow up action plan.

Stakeholders for this evaluation include (to be further be defined during Inception phase):

National/regional stakeholders include (non-exhaustive list):

- National IPA coordinators (NIPAC);
- National Coordinating Units in ENI countries (NCU)
- Other relevant institutions from the administrations of the partner countries
- Civil Society Organisations, particularly those involved in implementing/monitoring EU financial assistance
- Journalists and other multipliers in the regions
- Member States' missions to the EU and Embassies in the partner countries
- Academia community and young people

International stakeholders (non-exhaustive list):

- regional/international organisations (e.g. Anna Lindh Foundation, GIZ Regional cooperation)
- International Financial Institutions

EU stakeholders(non-exhaustive list):

- EEAS

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/tool_50_en.htm

- DG NEAR, DG COMM
- European Commission Representations in the Member States
- EU Delegations in partner countries
- EU Info Centres in the enlargement region and the Neighbourhood Info-Centre
- Europe Direct Information Network
- European Documentation Centres (EDCs)
- Enterprise Europe Network

The list of stakeholders will be further defined during Inception phase.

Data collection and methodology

The evaluation process will be carried out in four phases: an Inception Phase, a Desk Phase, a Field Phase, and a Synthesis Phase. Among the pool of main methodological techniques, the following key elements can be already pinpointed:

- A. **Evaluation Questions:** a draft set will be presented in the ToR and the evaluation team, in consultation with the EC Evaluation manager, will finalise and complete it (with Judgement criteria (JC) and indicators for each JC and relevant data collection sources and tools) during the inception phase. Expectations expressed by the ISG members and other key informants as well as the feasibility of arriving at an answer (based on a first desk review), will be considered.
- B. **Evaluation Matrix:** Judgment criteria, indicators and sources. Judgment criteria determine the appropriate indicators and, more generally, the nature of the data collected and the type of analysis. The indicators will need to allow cross-checking, triangulating and strengthening the evidence base on which the questions are answered. The information gathered for each indicator will need to be presented as an annex of the desk and final reports.
- C. **Data collection tools:** several tools will be used for collecting, structuring, processing and/or analysing data throughout the evaluation process: inventory of all EUIs (e.g. structures, location, amount, staffing, job profiles and job descriptions, staff recruitment, type of contracts), inventory of communication activities and tools used in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions per target audience during 2011-2017, Literature review, Interviews, focused groups, Case studies, Survey, Quantitative analysis.

Deliverables in the form of reports [and/or slide presentations] should be submitted at the end of the corresponding phases.

Key sources of information already available are (this list will be further detailed once a set of case studies are defined (see below):

- EU policy and strategic documents (Enlargement Strategies, European Neighbourhood Policy, etc.)¹²;
- Communication Strategy for the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations;
- Non-paper Strategic Communication on EU enlargement in the Western Balkans and Turkey;
- Information and communication programmes and reports of EU Delegations and EU Office;
- EUIs - contracts and implementation reports;
- Regional communication programme in the neighbourhood (2009-2014; 2015-2019) - contracts and implementation reports;

Some relevant EC evaluations have taken place. They will be taken into account in carrying out the current evaluation:

- Evaluation of IPA - Information and Communication Programmes¹³
- Evaluation of information and communication activities towards the EU Member States in the area of EU Enlargement¹⁴
- Mid-term evaluation of the project ENPI regional communication programme 2011-2013
- Mid-term evaluation of Europe Direct Information Centres (2013-2017)
- Mid-term evaluation of Europe Direct Information Centres (2009-2012)¹⁵
- Strategic evaluation of the visibility of the EU external action (2005-2010)¹⁶

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/node_en

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/evaluation_of_ipa-information_and_communication_programmes_-_volume_1.pdf.pdf

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2016/20160503_ccel_final_report.pdf

¹⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=2848197>

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/strategic-evaluation-visibility-eu-external-action-2005-2010_en